

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to FIGs. 2 - 5. These sheets, which includes FIGs. 2 - 5, replaced the original sheets including FIGs. 2 - 5. (included changes made)

Attachment: Replacement Sheets 1/2 and 2/2

Annotated Sheets 1/2 and 2/2 showing changes

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

Applicants affirm the election of the claims of Group I, claims 1 – 15, to be examined in the present application as agreed to in a telephone conversation with the examiner on January 12, 2006. Claims 16 – 22 having been drawn to a non-elected invention have been withdrawn. Claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14 and 15 have been amended.

The examiner objected to the drawings. Corrected drawings have been prepared and are attached hereto in which the cross hatching has been corrected to indicate the same materials as the specification and claims. Accordingly withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 – 13 and 15 were rejected as being indefinite. The examiner noted the use of the term “about” was indefinite and the term “an aesthetic function” did not have an objective standard. Applicants deleted all references to “about” and eliminated “an aesthetic function” by deleting that phrase and amending the “at least one external layer” to read, “at least one external decorative layer”. This is believed to alleviate the indefiniteness and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 6 – 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kreuzer, et al. (US 6,365,875), while claim 14 was rejected as being anticipated by Kreuzer, et al. The examiner noted for claims 1 and 15 that Kreuzer teaches a steering wheel/component comprising: (a) a base 3-7; and (b) at least one covering element applied onto said base 3-7, wherein said covering element comprises (i) at least one internal layer 2 comprising a thermoplastic material containing reinforcing fibers, and (ii) at least one external layer 1 located on a side of the internal layer 2 distal from said base 3-7 and having an aesthetic function. The examiner concluded that Kreuzer teaches the invention substantially as it was claimed. Kreuzer does not teach the reinforcing fibers comprising 10% to 80% by weight of the internal layer 2.

Applicants amended claims 1, 14 and 15 require that the fibers must be at least 12.0 mm in length and in the form of a mat or woven or non-woven fabric and the mat or woven or non-woven fabric impregnated with the thermoplastic. This feature is disclosed in paragraph 19 the present application. As this feature is neither suggested nor disclosed in Kreuzer, et al. it is requested these rejections be withdrawn.

The examiner rejected claims 1 – 5 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cattaneo, US patent No. 6,249,970 B1. The examiner notes regarding claims 1 and 15 that Cattaneo teaches a steering wheel/component

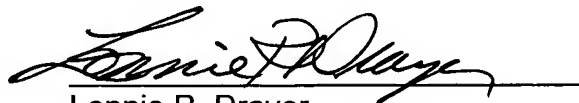
comprising: (a) a base 3; and (b) at least one covering element applied onto said base 3, wherein said covering element comprises (i) at least one internal layer 4, 5 comprising a thermoplastic material containing reinforcing fibers, and (ii) at least one external layer 15 located on a side of the internal layer 4, 5 distal from said base 3 and having an aesthetic function, and further stated regarding claims 2 and 3, Cattaneo's fibers 4, 5 are in the form of a fabric. The fabric inherently includes woven or non-woven fabric. See col. 2, lines 16-32. The dimension such as at least 12.0 mm long would have been a matter of choice in design because the claimed structures and the function they perform are the same as the prior art. Claim 14 was rejected as being anticipated by Cattaneo.

Applicants as noted above amended independent claims 1, 14 and 15 to reflect the concept that the fibers are in a mat or woven or non-woven fabric impregnated with the thermoplastic. Applicants concede Cattaneo disclosed using a fabric. Cattaneo fails to teach a fabric having at least 12.0 mm long fibers impregnated with the thermoplastic. Accordingly withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Applicants wish to direct the examiner's attention to the dependent claims 6, 7, 8 and 9 which were not rejected under Cattaneo. Each of these claims contain elements that were neither taught nor suggested in the Cattaneo patent and therefore applicants believe these claims are patentably distinct over the prior art cited when combined with independent claim 1 as amended and their separate patentability is argued.

For the reasons stated above, applicants urge the examiner to withdraw the rejections and allow the application to pass to issuance.

Respectfully submitted,



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ANNOTATED
SHEET SHOWING
CORRECTIONS

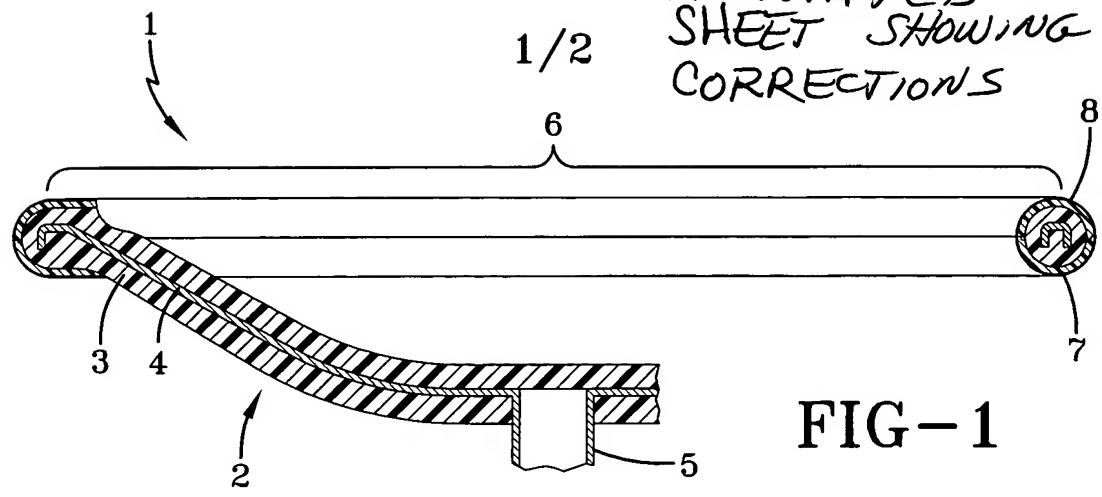


FIG-1

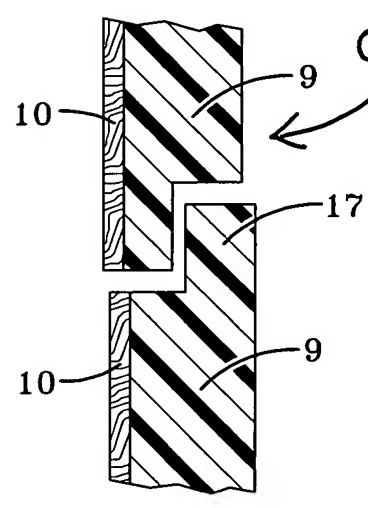


FIG-3

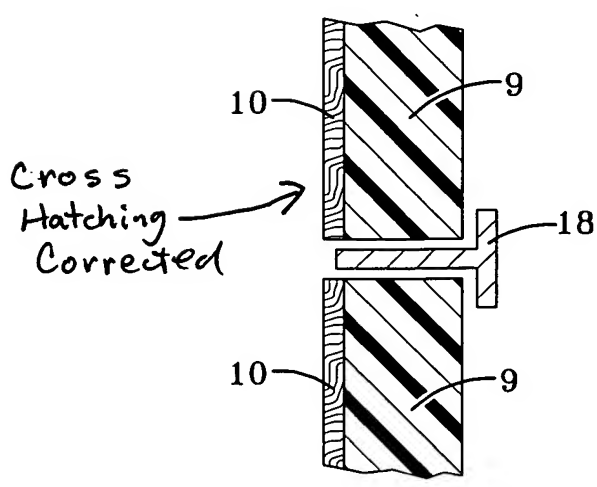


FIG-4

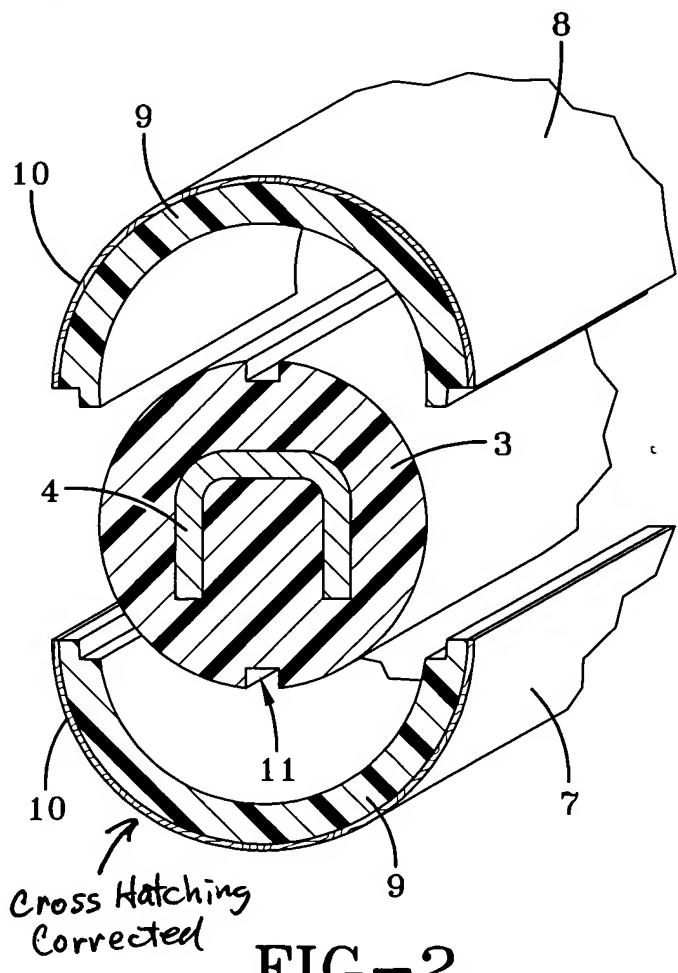


FIG-2

Cross Hatching Corrected
FIG-5

2/2
ANNOTATED
SHEET SHOWING
CORRECTIONS

